

EvolutionLabs at North Bethesda

Sketch, Preliminary, and Site Plan Amendment Applications

Pre-Submission Community Meeting

Tuesday, December 6, 2022, 7:00 PM

Virtual meeting held via Zoom;

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85863404831?pwd=MzArTCszendXcDd6b3g1L3ZZVS9xUT09>

1 (301) 715-8592, meeting ID: 858 6340 4831, passcode: 494164

MEETING MINUTES

Attendees on behalf of the Applicant:

Christopher Smith, Stonebridge
Jane Mahaffie, Stonebridge
Doug Firstenberg, Stonebridge
Rudraksha Jhaveri, Mahan Rykiel
Brett Spearman, Ewing Cole
Ian Duke, VIKA
Bob Dalrymple, Selzer Gurvitch
Matthew Gordon, Selzer Gurvitch

1) Applicant's presentation:

- Christopher Smith of Stonebridge began the meeting at 7:05 PM by welcoming everyone to this pre-submission community meeting for EvolutionLabs at North Bethesda. Matt Gordon of Selzer Gurvitch introduced the site and provided an overview of the procedural aspects of the community meeting. The site is the former Gables development property bounded by Old Georgetown Road to the west, Banneker Avenue to the north, Grand Park Avenue to the east, and Wall Park and the Kennedy Shriver Aquatic Center to the south. The site consists of approximately 5.2 acres of tract area, in addition to a portion of the abandoned Executive Boulevard right-of-way and a portion of the County Conference Center parcel. The site is split zoned with CR-3.0 up to 70' feet for a majority of the site and CR-4.0 up to 250' for the remaining site area. Based on the bioscience use proposed for the project, there are opportunities for height and FAR averaging to allow for the cluster of buildings being shown.
- Stonebridge, as the Applicant, will be proceeding with concurrent Sketch Plan, Preliminary Plan, and Site Plan Amendments. As part of that process, we have invited the community to review the development proposal, provide feedback, and ask any questions you may have. All individuals are entitled to become parties of record to receive future mailed notices about the project. If you are not already on the mailing list, please email Graham McSweeney of Selzer Gurvitch with your name and mailing address and he will add you to the list. Mr. McSweeney's email was added to the Zoom chatbox. Mr. McSweeney will also be taking meeting minutes which will be submitted with the applications to Park and Planning and become part of the public record.
- As a general overview, a Sketch Plan is intended to provide a conceptual look at the project focusing on building massing, access, public benefit points, and overall density and height. A Preliminary Plan is primarily focused on lotting, right-of way dedication and improvements, and adequacy of public facilities. A Site Plan reviews aspects such as architecture,

landscaping, lighting, and more detailed elements of the buildings. Unlike the Sketch Plan and Preliminary Plan amendments being proposed, the Site Plan amendment will only cover Phase I of multiple phases. Please enter any questions/comments you may have in the Zoom chatbox and hold all verbal questions/comments until after the Applicant's presentation.

- A PowerPoint presentation was displayed on the screen. Mr. Smith introduced himself as a senior development manager at Stonebridge overseeing the development of the project, named EvolutionLabs at North Bethesda. The project team consists of Ewing Cole as the architect, Mahan Rykiel as landscape architect, VIKA as civil engineer, and Selzer Gurvitch as land use counsel.
- An aerial was displayed with the site highlighted showing the proximity to nearby landmarks. The site is located one block south of the Pike and Rose development. Currently, a majority of the site is being used as a surface parking lot with the abandoned portion of Executive Boulevard running diagonally through the site. The White Flint Sector Plan recommends reconfiguration of the roads in this area to create rectangular blocks more conducive to development. This reconfiguration, named the "Western Workaround", is currently being worked on by the County and will allow this site to be redeveloped.
- The previously approved Gables Site Plan was displayed showing 476 residential units, 31,000 square feet of retail, and 995 parking spaces. The current application will amend the approved Site Plan to allow for a focus on life science development.
- A ground floor plan for the proposed multi-phase project was displayed. The vision of this site is to build a cluster of purpose-built life science buildings within north Bethesda to address market demand and lack of life science uses in the area. The project proposes 3 life science buildings (Tower A, B, C), each approximately 240,000 sf in size, for an approximate total of 720,000 square feet of new development. Tower A is planned to be 9 stories in height and located at the southeast corner of the site, while Tower B and Tower C are planned to be 8 stories in height and located along Banneker Avenue to the north. All 3 buildings will be serviced by the above-grade parking structure located adjacent to Wall Park on the southwest corner of the site. Consistent with the Sector Plan and prior plan approvals, the parking structure will include relocated parking for Wall Park. The project will be phased with Phase I including construction of a portion of the parking structure and Tower A.
- The project utilizes recent changes to the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance. Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 22-02, passed earlier this year by the County Council, allows for additional height by height averaging and increased flexibility for density in urban bio-health facilities. For this site, the maximum height will be set at 150' by the ZTA due to the split-zoning of the property and height averaging. Site massing views from the west and south were displayed. From a massing perspective, the project is stepping down to lower densities closer to Wall Park.
- An illustrative landscape plan was displayed. The lobbies for the 3 buildings will be located near the central drop-off area in the middle of the site. Tower B and C will have additional entrances on Banneker Avenue to activate the frontage. The Applicant reduced curb cuts to improve the pedestrian experience along Banneker Avenue. A central roadway bisects the site providing vehicle connectivity from east to west. There will be a right-in, right-out on to and

off of Old Georgetown Road, while the intersection at Grand Park Avenue will allow right and left turns.

- There are two key elements that are designed to enhance the public realm and provide community amenities for the neighborhood to enjoy. Tower B is placed off the property line to provide space for a pocket park at the northeast corner of the site. The space will provide a personal gathering space for the public and has been designed to be an extension of the sidewalk to appear more inviting. The second key element is the through-block pedestrian connection running north/south through the site to connect Wall Local Park to the south with the planned project across Banneker Avenue to the north.
- Rudraksha Jhaveri of Mahan Rykiel discussed further the planned northeast pocket park and through-block pedestrian connection. The goal of the pocket park is to activate the street by creating a very welcoming and comfortable amenity that the community can enjoy. Trees will provide shade without blocking views and outside seating will take advantage of the grade change on the site. The central plaza will be an integral part of the through-block pedestrian connection and will serve as a gateway to the mixed-use development to the north while also providing space for public gatherings and performances. The grade change of the site will be utilized to create an amphitheater in this area. The same user can have different experiences in this space at different times. Step-walls along the buildings will be used to create the stormwater experience. A curb-less section will be located at the center of the site to allow for cars, bikes, and pedestrians to share the road and safely traverse. The symbol of the project, the DNA helix pattern, will be incorporated into the paving. The connection to Wall Park to the south will consist of a large open lawn, pollinator garden, and outdoor seating. The goal is to have a place to relax, have picnics, and promote environmental education.
- A slide was displayed showing the illustrative Site Plan for Phase 1. Brett Spearman of Ewing Cole explained the internal roadway will be built in Phase I, along with Tower A and a portion of the parking structure (which will include the parking for Wall Park). Phase I will also include the lawn and garden space connecting to Wall Park that is located between the parking structure and Tower A.
- Street view renderings for Phase I were displayed from various directions. The large part of Tower A will be covered in horizontal bands of glass and a rainscreen that transitions in color. The architecture of Tower A is designed to create a pedestrian scale in both height and cadence. A screen wall at the top of Tower A will be silver aluminum to obscure lab equipment on top of the building.
- A slide was displayed outlining the estimated schedule of entitlements and construction. Mr. Smith explained the Sketch, Preliminary, and Site Plan amendment applications should be filed with Park and Planning before the end of the year, which will allow for the development review process to begin in January 2023 and a Planning Board hearing to be tentatively scheduled for May 2023. The Applicant will then proceed to finalize design documents and obtain permits before construction for Phase I is scheduled to start in Q2 of 2024, with an approximate 2-year construction period.
- Mr. Smith then concluded the Applicant's presentation and opened up the meeting for any questions or comments from the audience.

2) Questions/comments from the audience:

- Will the parking structure still be shared with the Aquatic Center?

Applicant response: Yes, this project will include replacing the surface parking at Wall Park with structured parking on our property consistent with the goals of the Sector Plan and prior plan approvals for the site. Details are still being worked on with County staff, but there is a proposed entrance to the parking structure from Wall Park.

- Is there an estimated timeframe for the parking structure?

Applicant response: A majority of the parking structure will be built in the first phase and the remainder built at a future phase.

- Does the parking structure still include parking for the Josiah Henson House? If not, why? There are a certain number of dedicated parking spaces for the Josiah Henson House that were pre-arranged via agreements with Planning and Parks. There currently is no public parking for the Josiah Henson House and this was supposed to be the project that replaced the parking spaces.

Applicant response: No, the parking structure does not include parking for the Josiah Henson House because we were not aware that was originally contemplated under the prior plan approvals. However, we will look into this issue with the Parks Department, which controls the Josiah Henson House, and provide a follow-up response.

- What kind of storm water management (both volume as well as quality) is being created to keep storm water in the site and not drain into the adjacent community of Luxmanor?

Applicant response: We are planning to treat all stormwater on-site; it will be retained through various bio-retention mechanisms on the property before being discharged into the public storm system and will meet all the Montgomery County stormwater management requirements.

- There are new State regulations that limit the volume of stormwater being discharged into the public storm system, meaning you need to retain a certain portion of the stormwater on the property. We have had a problem in our community with excessive stormwater discharge from other properties flooding nearby residences. Have you had discussions with anyone at the County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) or Planning staff about keeping all of your stormwater on-site and not discharging it? If so, which staff members have you been talking with?

Applicant response: We have not yet discussed that issue specifically with Planning staff but will be getting into those details shortly as the applications progress through the intake process. The main reviewer assigned to this project at Park and Planning is Natasha Fahim.

- How many residential units are currently planned for this development? Which MCPS cluster will students residing in the development attend? Any retail planned for the development?

Applicant response: No residential units are planned; this is a 100% commercial project. A coffee shop located at the northeast corner of the site near the pocket park will be the only retail aspect of the project.

- What is a “storm water experience”?

Applicant response: Historically, stormwater management was located underground and hidden from view. In keeping with modern trends, we want to showcase the processes that are involved and enhance the visual appeal to compliment the landscaping.

- What is being done to improve pedestrian safety along Old Georgetown Road for this site?

Applicant response: We are studying pedestrian safety as part of our design process and have spoken with Planning staff about providing safe pedestrian access. Improvements to sidewalks along the project’s frontages will be part of the development, but we will need to look further into what specific pedestrian safety measures are planned for and being requested by the County.

- What about Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)? Isn’t there a BRT station planned in close proximity to the site?

Applicant response: Yes, but we are only developing within the confines of the curbs, so there will be no impact on the BRT right-of-way or its design in this area.

- Did you evaluate other alternatives to loading other than via Grand Park Avenue?

Applicant response: Yes, we spent considerable time looking at alternatives to off-street loading and this configuration (as shown on the displayed slide) was determined to be the best solution to maximize functionality of the site based on the grade change and site constraints.

3) Conclusion

- Mr. Smith reminded all attendees that they should feel free to contact the Applicant via Mr. McSweeney at the email provided at any time with any comments, questions, or concerns you may have. Mr. Smith thanked the attendees for their interest in the project and participating in the community meeting. The meeting concluded at 7:45 PM.

Meeting minutes taken by Graham McSweeney, paralegal at Selzer Gurvitch.